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## SERMON CCCCLIV.

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### THE MANNER OF SELF-EXAMINATION.\*

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves."—  
2 CORINTHIANS 13 : 5.

EVERY believer is responsible for the formation, within himself, of an elevated and symmetrical Christian character. The attainment of the most eminent holiness is represented in the Scriptures as the result of the well-directed effort of the individual disciple. This effort will be aided and made effectual by the influences of God's Spirit. But these are coöperating influences; and ordinarily they are given in largest measure to him who uses most faithfully the appointed means of spiritual improvement. Even when God interposes to draw back to himself those of his children who have wandered most widely from him, there is no exertion of influence which supersedes the activity of the Christian. He must run, as well as be drawn; and it remains as certain that the merely passive Christian will not advance in the Divine life, as that the foot-traveller will make no progress, without personal exertion.

It is in part from this general principle in the Divine Government that the necessity results for frequency and fervency in prayer, and for the diligent study of the Scriptures. For this reason it is needful for the Christian diligently to cherish the spirit of love and faith, of penitence and humility. From the same principle arises the necessity for the discharge of the duty enjoined in the text. It is a duty frequently inculcated in the Scriptures. It is a duty whose natural influence is, if it be properly discharged, to

\* It may be proper to say that this Discourse, as preached to the writer's congregation, was designed to follow another founded upon the same text, and treating specifically of the *nature* of the Injunction.

benefit the intellect, and produce a habit of thoughtfulness; to quicken and invigorate the conscience; to suggest clear views of the individual character, and thus to rectify and enlarge all our conceptions of truth, and cherish the emotions which are appropriate to it. These are its natural influences. They are influences which have been beautifully illustrated in the life of many eminent saints, and which have never been wanting to the spiritual culture of those who have risen most nearly to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Most clearly, therefore, it is the duty of the Christian to examine himself. If he do not, he neglects to obey a positive command. If he do not, he neglects to employ a prominent means of spiritual improvement.

But now the question arises, *How* shall the Christian examine himself? We admit the duty, but how shall it be discharged? We perceive the privilege, but how shall it be improved? And this is a question of pressing and practical importance. For it is a fact frequently perceived, that even those means of grace which are most clearly of Divine appointment, and which seem to correspond most perfectly with the wants of the soul, must yet be rightly used in order to the production of beneficial effects. They have no inherent efficacy. They will not equally benefit the soul, whether employed in one way or another, rightly or wrongly, prayerfully or perversely. Indeed, unless rightly used, they lose their distinctive character. They are no longer means of grace, but antecedents and evidences of spiritual declension. It is as indispensable that the exercises of the Christian be rightly performed in order to the development of their appropriate influence, as it is that food be rightly prepared and rightly received, in order that it may nourish the physical system. So it is with the study of the Scriptures. If they be studied only at long intervals, and in a spirit of self-confidence and pride, this will rather injure than benefit the soul. So it is with prayer; and so with self-examination. It may be so performed as to be productive of no spiritual improvement. It may be so performed, even, as to produce a morbid and unhealthy rather than a vigorous and active piety. We should infer that it might be so from all analogies, and from the usual laws of God's administration, and from the indications of the Scripture. We know that it is so, because we see the fact illustrated in others, because we have perceived it in our own experience. It is to be feared that there are many Christians who habitually neglect this duty, because they seem to themselves to have performed it in time past without deriving from it the least advantage. Nay, there are sometimes individuals who confess that to them it has been only a minister to pride, or the aid and ally of a fruitless curiosity; an exercise not resulting in any new quickness and tenderness of emotion, or in any in-

creased activity in the service of God; but rather in a deeper lethargy, and a more obstinate self-love. The question, then, is one of much practical importance, not for such persons only, but for all: How shall this duty be performed? What is the proper manner of self-examination, adopting and applying which the Christian may derive those benefits from the exercise which are its appropriate fruit? To furnish, in part, an answer to this inquiry, will be the object of this discourse.

Of course, in this, as in every other religious exercise, in the absence of specific Scriptural directions, the nature of the end to be attained must designate the manner in which it should be sought. That, therefore, is the proper mode of self-examination, by the use of which we are enabled to gain the clearest insight into the facts of our spiritual state, and to compare these best with the law and word of God; that mode by which the habit of thoughtfulness is most effectually promoted, the moral faculty quickened and energized, correct views suggested of our own character, and of all truth, and the appropriate emotion excited and cherished; in a word, that mode by which we gain most rapidly in beauty and strength of Christian character. Keeping in view this general fact, it will not be difficult to ascertain with greater minuteness the true mode of self-examination.

1. And first, this exercise should not be so performed as *merely to gratify the curiosity*.

It is a noble field for investigation and thought, which is opened in the soul. Within it lie principles of more importance than are found in the studies of the linguist or the jurist; facts of greater variety and of higher interest, than ever reveal themselves in the researches of the naturalist—I had almost said in the records of the historian. It is a truth sublime, almost incomprehensible, that within every human soul there lie the germs not only of all written history, but of that nobler history that never has been written; that here are found the seminal principles from which have been elsewhere evolved the crime and the heroism, the reverses and the triumphs, that darken or brighten the history of the past. To examine these principles, to trace these facts, what exercise of mind can be in itself nobler, or in its interest more engrossing! Of the pleasurable mental excitement produced by its pursuit, no man can form an adequate conception, who has not, for a time at least, devoted himself to it. In it, all the elements of interest seem to unite. It is the study of practical truth; and therefore attractive. It is the study of truth the most abstract and recondite; and therefore in yet another aspect exciting and attractive. It is the study of ourselves; and therefore fitted most of all to interest the mind. It invigorates the reasoning powers. It furnishes the imagination with room and motive for continual exertion. It requires, and it exer-

cises, all the faculties of the soul ; and therefore it interests them all as does scarcely any other department of human thought. There are no more striking instances of literary devotion, than are afforded by men who have spent their lives in studying the soul. Archimedes, meditating upon the properties of the circle, Galileo, studying the stars, and Champollion, deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphics, are met and equalled in the earnestness of their exertions, by Plato, examining the problems of philosophy, by Leibnitz and Descartes, investigating the sources and laws of human activity. There is danger that something of the same spirit of merely intellectual inquiry may infuse itself almost imperceptibly into the mind of the Christian, as he sets himself to the searching of his heart ;—that he will forget that this exercise is only the means to the attainment of self-knowledge, which self-knowledge is in turn to be the foundation of a systematic and persevering self-discipline ; and that, forgetting thus the true design and nature of self examination, he will become absorbed in it as in itself an *end*, to be pursued for itself alone, and not for the ulterior and spiritual benefit to be derived from it. There is danger that it will be so. There are some minds in which it will certainly be so, unless they are forewarned against it. If a man be accustomed to abstract speculation, if it be the natural and habitual tendency of his mind to analyse and dissect, there is danger that he will never truly obey the injunction of the Apostle ; that he will study his inner experiences for present pleasure, not for future profit ; as a species of intellectual gymnastics, tending to keep the mind alert and vigorous, not as a means of guarding against temptation, and promoting humility. And thus pursuing it, he will fail entirely of deriving from the investigation its highest advantage. He might as well study the abstract treatises of the mental philosopher ; he might as profitably engage in the discussion of any question of casuistry or criticism ; nay, he might devote himself with as direct a return of spiritual improvement, to the examination of the principles and processes of the pure mathematics, as spend his time in an examination of his own heart, which shall only gratify his curiosity, or strengthen his powers of attention and analysis. We must study for the purpose of improvement, or improvement will not be the issue of our study. Progress in personal holiness, must be the end desired and aimed at, or it will not be attained. If it be not, the curiosity may be gratified, but the conscience will not be benefited ; the intellect may gain new power to discriminate, but the heart will remain unhumbled, the soul will be no fitter than before for the white robe and the crown.

2. But I remark again, that the exercise of self-examination must not be performed *excessively*.

It would seem at first sight as if there could be but slight danger

of this exercise being pursued to an improper and inordinate degree. It is usually so difficult, and often so disagreeable, that it would seem almost impossible that any one should be in danger of confining himself too exclusively to this department of Christian activity; as impossible, as that a person should become so addicted to the use of an unpleasant medicine, as to endanger the continuance of the physical health. But there are sometimes those whose disposition it is to keep the eye of the soul continually turned in upon its own processes; who are by nature, and as the result of their mental constitution, introverting, self-questioning persons, always doubting the reality of their experiences, always inclined to scrutinize and suspect. And there are sometimes others, who seem to be free from this natural bias of mind, who yet become so habituated to the exercise of self-scrutiny, as to feel in it a singular delight, and to be unwilling to exchange it for the other and equally imperative duties to which the believer is also called. Just as—to resume the comparison—just as persons do sometimes become so accustomed to the use of medicinal drugs, improbable as the fact would certainly appear to a merely *à priori* reasoner, that such stimulus seems necessary to them, and their spirits sink, and their natural food becomes distasteful.

To guard against this possible danger, it is important to keep in mind the fact that self-examination, useful, and even essential as it is, in its own sphere, and its proper relations, is always to be *connected with the use of other means of spiritual improvement*. It is not the only duty which God enjoins; nor the only means of grace which he has graciously provided. He has given us faculties for apprehending other truth than that which lies within ourselves; and he demands that we use these faculties. He has made us social as well as personal beings, and therefore it is the law of our constitution, that in order to receive from the truth that impression which shall be most lively, and permanent, and influential, we must meditate upon it in company with others, as well as retire within the recesses of our own souls, and there examine our hearts. The most careful and diligent self-scrutiny can never supersede the searching of the Scriptures. From these alone can come that light beneath whose illumination we can explore the solitudes of the heart; those principles that must direct and aid us in our study of ourselves. One's eye will become contracted, and its very angle of vision will be changed, if it be continually bent to the examination of his own person. He must frequently lift it from himself, and let it sweep the horizon and rise to the study of the stars, if he would preserve its clearness undimmed, its beauty and excellence unimpaired. And so the Christian must examine the truths that lie around him and beyond him—above all he must survey often and long those sublime realities of Redemption and Immortality, which hang as luminous orbs above the darkness of

the world, if he would strengthen and purify his spiritual vision. To this end he must search the Scriptures. He must be regular in his attendance on all the appointed means of grace. He must be frequent and earnest in prayer;—ever remembering that the discharge of one duty cannot compensate for the omission of another, and that self-examination is only conducive to the highest well-being of the soul, when it is united in symmetrical proportion with the other appliances of spiritual strength.

And while self-examination, in order to be truly beneficial, is thus to be connected with other means of spiritual improvement, it is also to be *continually subordinated to active effort in the service of Christ*. If it be not, it is certainly excessive, and from it there cannot be derived the highest profit. It is a truth, borrowed indeed in its expression from an almost pagan philosopher, but worthy always to be kept in mind by the devoutest Christian, that “the highest end of being is an Action, not a Thought—though it were the noblest.” God made men to be active as well as meditative beings; to work as well as think; to exert an influence upon others, as well as to grow up themselves. To this end he has gifted them with various powers. He has endowed them with faculties fitted for exercise, and gaining strength by every act of exercise. He has given them the power of movement, the desire of influence, the faculty of speech. He who forgets that active exertion in God’s service is the end of his being, shows thereby that he overlooks the arrangements of God’s providence, and forgets his own true dignity and trust. He should be the almoner of God’s blessings, not their repository; an active distributor, not a passive recipient. In this world “*God and the angels are the only rightful spectators* ;” and only he who remembers this and acts upon it, will attain the full stature of spiritual manhood. There is something dwarfing to the soul either in inactivity, or in an activity that terminates upon itself. Of such a state the sure result is debility and disease. The soul will become timorous and suspicious. It will lose its strength of resolve and its self-reliance. It will find fears in the way, and the grasshopper will seem a burden. Its hope will want assurance. Its faith in God will almost fail; and there is danger that all its conceptions of religious truth will become indistinct and confused. There is a law here against which there is no rebelling, and from which there is no escape. It is no more certain that the prisoner, confined to a few square feet of space and forbidden to go beyond them, will lose in physical strength and mental manliness, the buoyancy of his spirits, and the clearness of his intellect, and the courage of his heart; it is no more certain that the artisan, compelled to retain for successive hours, in the same heated atmosphere, the same unnatural position, will thereby be doomed to premature decrepitude; than it is that the soul which devotes all its energies to the scrutiny of itself, and never passes that narrow



circle in which it is wont to walk, and never heartily enlists in enterprises of philanthropy, will lose the brightness of its hope, and the energy of its faith, and will be made fearfully conscious that it is not growing in grace, nor fulfilling the design for which God sent it hither. Let us see to it, my Christian brethren, that while we are diligent and careful in the study of ourselves, we are also active in the cause of Christ. We must go abroad in life. We must distribute of God's bounty, as He distributes of the rain and of the light, to even the evil and unthankful. By our life and by our words we must preach to all the precious gospel of the Lord, whether they will hear or will forbear. Doing our duty to ourselves, we must not leave undone our duty to others. If we do, we shall lose the power to benefit ourselves. If we thus isolate one duty from the rest, and break that glorious circle ordained of God, and set like a rainbow in the moral heavens, our very self-communion becoming excessive will become injurious. Our inactivity will be the fruitful parent of unbelief and error; the light of God's countenance will be withdrawn, and the joy of his salvation will no longer abide within us.

3. But I remark again, that the self-examination of the Christian should be performed *regularly*.

It is a singular fact that the mind having once operated in a particular mode, finds it thereafter more and more easy to act in the same mode. It is a singular fact; one hardly to be fully explained, when we remember the essential spirituality of the soul and its independence upon the body. But that it is a fact, the observation and consciousness of every man bears witness. It is from this fact that the necessity arises for regularity in every mental and spiritual exercise. Such regularity in the past goes far to ensure its continuance in the future. What has been the uniform habit of the mind will not be omitted; certainly not without causing the fact of omission to rise into distinct cognisance. And while less easily omitted it will be more easily performed; since every time the soul puts forth its power, it gains a new facility in putting it forth in future in the same direction, to the same end. And thus the exercise which has become regular and habitual, will be performed not only more easily, but more accurately; no part being omitted, and the final result being attained with greater certainty, as well as with greater celerity. Thus it is obviously and always, with the exertions of the physical system. Thus it is as uniformly, and almost as obviously, with any intellectual process or spiritual act. Thus it is with *self-examination*. The man who performs it only when opportunity offers, will soon find that opportunity ceases to offer. If he discharge the duty irregularly, he will ere long cease to discharge it; or if he continue to do it at all, it will be only after long intervals, and always as a hard and

unpleasant task. He must, indeed, often scrutinize the act at the moment when it is most vividly before the mental vision. And doing this frequently, he will come at last to do it spontaneously, without the consciousness of effort. But even then the regularity of the exercise must not be intermitted. Just as the student must devote his usual hours to the prosecution of his studies, if in that prosecution he would be most successful; just as the merchant must transact his affairs in those parts of the day to which he has been accustomed, if he would have his intellect clear, and therefore his plans successful; just as the Christian must pray regularly if he would pray earnestly, making his prayer, as was said by one of old, "the Key of day, and the Lock of night;" just so must he set apart a stated season and consecrate it religiously to the purposes of self-scrutiny, if he would find himself gaining the clearest views of his own character, and adding most rapidly to the sensibility and the strength of his moral affections.

4. And again: The exercise of self-examination should be performed *earnestly* as well as *regularly*.

There is always danger that the exercises of the Christian will be indolently performed. Their very frequency may furnish excuses for negligence, and the regularity of their recurrence may tend to make them matters of mere routine. This is a tendency which results directly from both the inertness and the sinfulness of the Christian. It is therefore a general tendency, extending to all his spiritual exercises, though of course affecting some more immediately and obviously than others. There is danger that a man will study the Bible rather as a matter of custom, than as a source of present and personal advantage; that while the eye is following the words of inspiration, the soul, in all the energy of its faculties, may be planning a mercantile transaction, or searching out a new source of enjoyment, or at best, contemplating some collateral truth of science or history, rather than summoning its whole resources to grasp and master the verities of the Gospel. And so there is danger that the Christian may study himself, not with singleness of attention, with energy of endeavor, but listlessly and lazily, as if the work were to be easily accomplished. His efforts must correspond, indeed, with the character of the object to be examined. For there are some acts and states of the soul that cannot be separated from all others, and held up in sharp outline to the mental vision; whose moral qualities are so faintly defined that the mind must catch them at a glance, as the eye catches the delicate blush of the evening sky, or the first star-beams that sparkle through it. But even then the glance must be penetrating. There must be nothing languid in the action of the soul. There can be no growth in grace produced by a self-examina-



tion which is not earnest. There is a good effect resulting directly from the act itself; for it is an act of obedience, an act of piety. But this effect will be altogether unattained if the scrutiny be not earnest, for there is no obedience and no piety in an act of the soul that is simply prompted by habit and routine. There is a wonderful awakening of the conscience, and rectification of all the conceptions of truth when one seriously and resolutely studies himself. But there is no such effect, and there can be none, when the study is hasty and superficial. It is impossible that a man should see the beauty of a landscape, that his eye should note and his memory retain its characteristic features, the curve of its hills and the course of its streams, and all the varied relations of valley and field and village and city, while all the time his mind is abstracted from the scene, examining a fact of science, listening to a discussion of policy, recalling a tale of suffering. And much more is it impossible that the Christian should gain a clear conception of his own character while his thoughts are elsewhere, in his business or in his pleasure, calculating the changes of the markets, or meditating some scheme of future enjoyment. He must be *earnest* in the work, or he cannot be successful. Calm, indeed, as it befits him to be who is engaged in a work requiring more than almost any other the clearest perception and the coolest analysis; but still remembering that inactivity is not calmness; that that is the true tranquillity of mind which is the accompaniment and the result of high activity; which is the fruit of fixedness of purpose and earnestness of effort. The Christian who would thoroughly search his heart, must shut his eye to all things else, and steadily survey the facts of his inner life; bending to this one purpose every energy of his soul, expelling from his thoughts all foreign subjects, and striving with all the calmness, but also with all the earnestness of a man whose every faculty is awake and at work, to examine himself. He must familiarize his conscience with the eternal principles of Duty. He must accustom it to apply these principles with rapidity and certainty to the infinite variety of human volition. He must teach it to trace the act to its source; to discriminate between that which is voluntary, deliberate, and that which is indeliberate, instinctive; between the transgression which is the result of wilful perverseness, and that which is unintelligent, the creature of ignorance; between that ignorance which is manifestly culpable, and that which has its origin in events and circumstances lying beyond the range of individual responsibility. Thus only will he be conscious of quickened progress in the way to heaven. Thus only will he attain the end of his labor, and be made meet for the kingdom of God.

5. And I remark again, fifthly, that the exercise of self-examination must be performed *honestly* as well as earnestly.

There must be no shrinking from that self-knowledge to which it leads us, and no unwillingness to accept its revelations; but a single desire to learn the truth, and, having learned, to profit by it. It is easy for the selfishness of the soul to embody itself in forms, and clothe itself in costumes, that shall be wonderfully deceptive. Often, it is only to be detected by the closest examination, and the most searching analysis. And so great is the strength of human depravity, and so pervading its influence, that even the Christian is in danger of attributing that to the principle of benevolence, which really results from the selfishness of the heart. Our depravity resembles in some points those physical diseases which are silent in their progress, and slow in their manifestation, only because they are deeply seated, and almost certainly fatal; and just as the gangrene is to be detected in the wound by deep and painful probing, and the true type and character of unseen disease is only to be determined after the most careful comparison of diagnostics—just so is it demanded that that self-scrutiny which shall discover the presence and the power of sin shall be careful and earnest. And as the physician must apply the probe, and examine the system, regardless of the reluctance and pain of the patient, so must he who searches himself be honest in the examination, though for the time it cost him a suffering that is like the cutting off of the hand, or the plucking out of the eye. It will be painful to discover that deeds of apparent charity have been really the result of the love of applause. It will be painful to find that the articles of belief which we have defended most vehemently, and upon our adherence to which we have possibly rested our hope, are held by us rather because they flatter our pride or suit with our interest, than because our conviction of their truth is intelligent and prayerful, the result of devout and deliberate thought. It will be painful to discover that our religious emotions derive their apparent tenderness and strength, rather from sympathy with others, or from the circumstances in which we are placed, or from the peculiar state of the physical system, than from a clear and comprehensive view of the glory of God's character, and of the unspeakable preciousness of Christ's atonement. But if the fact be so, the Christian must not shrink from the discovery. It will be a profitable pain; a pain which may be to him the occasion of wonderful advances in spiritual strength. He must not fear to feel his weakness. If he do, he cannot know for what succor to apply. He must not be unwilling to know his guilt. If he be, his self-examination can never correct his views of himself, or illustrate the glory of redemption, and the largeness of God's grace. No, the Christian who would derive spiritual profit from his self-communion, must not only sit down regularly to survey his state as a moral being, but must be willing to know the worst; resolute to look steadily in the face the terrible realities

of need and guilt. Thus will he be humbled by it. Thus will his faith in Christ be quickened, and his penitence for sin made true and deep.

6. If the time permitted, I might remark sixthly, that the Christian should examine himself *prayerfully*.

He should do so, because it is the natural influence of prayer to make the soul humble and honest, to tranquillize the mind, and to elevate the heart; and, therefore, he who searches himself prayerfully will not only be likely to do it more regularly and more earnestly, avoiding equally remissness upon the one hand and excess upon the other; but will do it more humbly and more thoroughly; will survey himself from a higher point of view; will be quicker to detect a sin, and readier to confess it. Above all, the Christian should examine himself prayerfully, because under the divine administration prayer is the appointed antecedent of spiritual blessings; and only he who rises from his closet to the scrutiny of himself, can look with confidence for those influences of the Holy Spirit which are needed to fit the soul for that "retiring inward" through which, as St. Bernard has pithily expressed it, we "must ascend upward."

7. But passing thus hastily a point upon which I should love to dwell, and whose importance would demand for it a more extended survey if it did not commend itself so readily to every Christian, I proceed to remark in the seventh and last place, that the Christian should examine himself *with a constant reference to the character of Jesus as the perfect standard*.

The comparison of the character with some higher and absolute standard is obviously an essential element in self-examination. It is not enough that the phenomena of the spiritual state be themselves ascertained. They must be tested. Their character and tendencies must be tried, by appeal to an unerring tribunal. If they are not thus tried, the good effect is lost which would be otherwise realized, if even a positively evil influence is not exerted by the investigation. The true character of the inner life will hardly be detected. There is danger that the soul, blinded by sin, may come gradually to overlook the guilt that clings to its holiest things, and may even cease to discriminate between the slighter gradations of moral character; and thus that the final result may be a spirit of self-confidence instead of dependence, of pride instead of humility. The occasional sin may thus grow into a habit, and the prevailing selfishness of the heart may gain new vigor, and assume new authority from the very exercise which should have tended to overthrow its authority and destroy its power. It is only when we compare the state of our character with the eternal principles of

Right revealed in the word of God, that the exercise of self-scrutiny will develop itself into its appropriate fruits, of pious feeling and holy living. And herein it is that we see one ground of the necessity for the revelation of the man Christ Jesus. There were other ends higher than this, attained by the incarnation and obedience of the Son of God. They were necessary as elements in the basis of the sinner's justification; as illustrating the holiness of the law, and vindicating its authority. But they were needful also as furnishing in the character of Jesus, a perfect standard for all succeeding generations, which Christians may strive to imitate, and in comparison with which they may feel continually their own unworthiness. In this character, therefore, were combined the purity of the loftiest abstract principle, with the individuality and attractiveness of the strictly personal character. It embodied a beauty higher than Plato imagined, in a life as real as Plato lived. It is united with divinity, and therefore impressive; and yet it is human, and therefore clothed with all that is attractive in similarity and sympathy. No Christian can rightly meditate upon it, none ever did thus meditate upon it, without discovering more fully his own depravity. It has been sometimes imagined that certain species of electric light yet undiscovered, might so illuminate the body that seats of disease should be perceptible, which were before unknown, and causes of weakness be discerned, that had never developed themselves in actual debility; and so the light which comes from the life of Christ, illustrates the presence of sin where it was least suspected, and shows our need of continual support. By such an examination must the Christian's conscience be quickened, his humility deepened, his penitence increased. The production of such effects rests upon laws of mental operation with which all are familiar. The painter gazing upon a Madonna of Raffaele—the sculptor admiring the matchless symmetry of that wonderful Apollo, which all of after time have united in attributing to an almost creative chisel—are humbled, yet animated as they look. They see more clearly than before their own defects; but only because their very Ideal of beauty is heightened and made more distinct; and thus in their present discouragement lies the promise of their future progress. It is upon a nobler form than any Apollo that the Christian looks. It is by gazing upon a higher beauty than that of the richest coloring that the Christian is humbled; even upon the beauty of the inner life of Him, the glory of whose outward form no pencil of the painter has been able to reproduce. His humility, therefore, shows that his conscience is impressed. It is at once the ground of a present penitence, and the pledge and promise of a future and more consummate holiness. Oh, my friends, let us ever study ourselves in full view of the character of Jesus; with his high and passionless purity contrasting always our low ambition, our craving appetite, our struggling and tu-

multuous passions. Thus shall our hearts burn within us by the way. From every act of such self-scrutiny, we shall rise up refreshed and purified ; with consciences more sensitive ; with minds more open to the influence of the truth ; with higher aspirations ; with new resolves.

My Christian friends, the subject we have considered addresses itself to us. There is always danger that the Christian will neglect to examine himself. His constitutional indolence may unite with the pride of his heart, in prompting to this. The tendencies of a particular era may set so strongly towards outward and visible action, as naturally to divert the soul from the scrutiny of itself. So it is, emphatically, at present. The calm, contemplative piety of the fathers is almost forgotten, is certainly not imitated ; and an aggressive activity, sometimes regular and wise, and sometimes impetuous and impulsive, has usurped its place. There is now, therefore, peculiar danger that we shall not study our own hearts. Against this, we are bound to guard. Knowledge of self is always useful, and the power to gain it a high prerogative of the soul. But to us as Christians, this knowledge is indispensable ; for without it we cannot know our points of weakness ; we cannot know for what to pray. There will be sources of danger within us of whose very existence we are unaware. Proclivities to sin may be slumbering in our hearts, which only need a fitting occasion to develop themselves in the vilest excesses. Passions may be dormant there, that in some moment of incaution shall spring upon us, in full panoply, and with an unimagined strength, like the Spirit of evil, when touched by the spear of Ithuriel. We are therefore false to our trust if we do not examine ourselves ; if we do not so study our hearts, as to be profited thereby. To this end, we must be watchful and vigilant ; not so searching ourselves as merely to gratify the curiosity ; nor as if we were unmindful of other means of spiritual improvement ; but examining ourselves with the same regularity with which we come to the house of God ; doing it with earnestness of attention, and with an honest and prayerful desire to learn the truth, and to be benefited by it. Above all, we must *try* our character, comparing it constantly with that mind which was in Christ Jesus ; that so we may gain new vigor of Christian principle, and new activity in Christian duty : that from our rigorous self-scrutiny, under the influences of the Spirit of God, may spring a piety more grand in its symmetry, more beautiful in its coronal of love, richer in all the fruits of holy living ; that we may here experience a truer penitence, a more contrite humility, a more triumphant faith ; and that at last, being strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

## SERMON CCCCLV.

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### THE PLACE OF REST AND HOME OF THE SOUL.\*

"As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." PROVERBS 27: 8.

A most important lesson, which has a legitimate application to *many*, if not all the relations and duties of life, is taught in this text, and enforced by a very simple and striking comparison: "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

The text needs but to be stated, in order to be understood. It is taken for granted, that the allusion is to that class of birds, with which we are all familiar, whose instinct prompts them to select a particular place for the building of their nests. The natural skill of such birds, in selecting *their place*, in the process of erecting, excavating, or searching out natural or artificial fixtures and retreats, to be occupied by them during the period of procreation and incubation, is sufficiently well understood by us all. The watchfulness, steadfastness of purpose, industry, and fidelity of such birds during all this period, is so characteristic of them, that when we know where they have reared, or chosen their nests, we know where they are to be found, unless driven away by necessity, or danger. When the end for which the tenement was chosen, or made, is accomplished—then, and not till then, is it deserted. Very few, indeed, are the exceptions to this rule, and such exceptions are fatal. The eggs of the wandering bird are barren, and its brood dies from neglect.

No matter how beautiful their plumage—how gaily and sweetly they may sing, or how graceful may be their motion, in their roaming among enticing fields and flowers, if they neglect *their home*, they might as well have no home. A silly bird, indeed, is that which wandereth from her nest!

It is implied in the text, that some persons, some professedly rational, intelligent, moral, and accountable beings, are chargeable, in their sphere of activity, with a similar inconsistency and folly.

It is here assumed that every man *must have a place*, which is, by distinction and pre-eminence, "*his place*." The man who

\* It is due to the author of this discourse to say, that it was written without the thought of its publication, and is printed without revision.—EDITOR.



squanders what he never earned—the man who steals for a livelihood, the man whose heart knows no bond to home and cherished friendships, to whom the face of a stranger is as acceptable as the face of a friend, who can find all he aspires after in eating, drinking, and sleeping, no matter where—in seeing, no matter what, in being seen, no matter by whom—in short, the individual who has no roots to his heart, nor fixed sympathies in his soul—such an one may float like a feather upon the wind—may have no place, nor be fit to fill one if he had:—it is not of such vacuities that the text speaks—but, as you perceive, it is of a man—*foolish*, it is true, but yet a man.

A man must have a *place*; *his own place*. He must have a *place* of business, if we look at the subject in the light of fixed worldly avocations—a place where he can steadily pursue his calling—where he can be found, where his energies may take root, and his industry be productive. If he wanders away from *this place*, his projects will be addled projects. Go to the places of trade for an illustration: Is the merchant a wanderer from his counter and counting-room? Is the mechanic away from his shop? Is the market-man away from his stand?—the business of such persons will prove a failure.

The same is true of professional men. They must have a place, and times, when and where each may be found in *his place*. The family must have a *place*, and that place should be a home—not a mere contingent dormitory and refectory, as is the case with multitudes, but A HOME, where the kindly sympathies of the heart may expand, and be schooled into the habits of well-regulated social affection, and useful living. But not to particularize further in the way of tracing out the parallel implied in the text; I pass now to the opening and application of the subject in a more important point of view than has been alluded to in the foregoing remarks and illustrations.

Man is something more than a creature who eats, and drinks, and sleeps: he has other and higher interests than those which pertain to the worldly avocations in which he is engaged, and the domestic and earthly kindred ties in which the merely social sympathies are enlisted. I speak not disparagingly of any worldly calling, nor of the pure ties of the heart among those who love and are beloved; but there is a Being who is more to man than any other being. There is a place for man which is, by the highest moral distinction and pre-eminence, *his place*. That Being is God! and that place is the *right attitude* of man's soul TOWARDS GOD.

God is the great centre of Being, in the moral, as well as in the natural world. In the compass of all surrounding beings and things, God is the soul's polar point of rest, his heart's home—HIS PLACE.

The similitude of the magnetic compass may be employed, ap-

propriately, in the illustration of this idea : You have seen that wonderful and beautiful piece of mechanism, the magnetic compass :— you have seen the polarized needle quiet at its place of rest ; you may have caused it to forsake its place temporarily, by the application of some foreign controlling force, and when you withdrew your hand, no matter to which of the other thirty-one points you held it, it swiftly returned to its own place. Now, God is to the rightly disposed heart of man what the *pole* is to the *magnetic needle*—his place. The needle of the soul—the supreme and ever constant affections of the heart, should point to God.

The fall of man destroyed the spiritual polarity of the human heart, but divine Grace restores it, in regeneration and sanctification. The partially sanctified heart may yield to temptations, and, like the needle, follow some interposing foreign influence away from its place, but, as the needle shows its restlessness, and speeds back to its point with tremulous haste, so the truly pious soul is restless in its wanderings, and, breaking away from the seductions which may have caused it to depart temporarily from God, it flies, as with the wings of a bird, to its place ; and the Psalmist interpreted the feelings of such a one, when he, under Divine inspiration, exclaimed, “Return to thy Rest, Oh, my soul !”

Show me a man whose supreme affections are fixed upon, or following after other beings and things, than *God and His glory*, and you see one who is out of his place ;—the needle of his heart has no right temper. The merely speculative believer in God, the indifferent believer, and the blank Atheist meet here on the same ground ; having eyes they see not, having ears they hear not, having hearts they feel not ;—God, as the object of love, is not in all their thoughts ;—selfish fears, or a respect for men, operating upon such persons, like external commotions upon a deranged needle, may sometimes jar and force them (if I may so express the idea) towards God, but the place of *their* rest is elsewhere ; they rival the serpent in crawling upon the ground, and in satisfying themselves with dust.

“As a bird that wandereth from the nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.” Foolishness is personified in each ; and, as the eggs, or the brood of the bird that wandereth, shall prove barren, or die ; so shall the hopes of the sinner be cut off ; he shall be driven away in his wickedness ; having despised *the place*, the *only* rest of his soul, in the time of seeking a place, and rest,—he will at last be provided with a place where aversion to God will be punished, and his misery will be equal to his folly and guilt.

God appointed to Judas *a place*, to which we are told he went, when he died ; and of the positive and eternal wretchedness of his condition we may be well assured from the language, “it were better for that man, if he had not been born.”

Thus interpreting the text, in the light of Divine Revelation,

we may resolve the whole of what has been said into the following general proposition. *God is the alone proper and satisfying rest of the soul of man*; and an attitude of supreme love to God—the practical surrender of all we have, and are, and hope for, to Him,—this is man's only proper, and safe, and truly happy place.

I shall assume this proposition as proven by the word of God, and the experience of men, and shall proceed to another view of the subject—after pausing a moment to clear away a plausible refuge, behind which the unregenerate man sometimes retreats. Do I read this unuttered thought, in any breast,—“Well, I am happy in the place I now occupy, and I make no professions of being indebted to the machinery of the Cross of Christ, and the Holy Spirit *for my happiness*. I do not see anything to disturb my comfort, though I make no profession of being a Christian?” *Consider!* may not a man dance, and revel, and exclaim, “I am happy,” over an undiscovered mine of gunpowder?—may not the play go on, on the stage; and the crowded boxes of the theatre exhibit a multitude of absorbed and happy countenances, while the undiscovered flames are running underneath, from casement to casement, stealing the march of fear, and cutting off retreat from sudden and terrible death?

The scoffer tells us that ignorance is the mother of devotion—God forgive the taunt and sneer!—while I ask if it may not be true that ignorance is sometimes fool-hardy, when there is just cause for alarm? Did the gay reveller but know of the existence of the mine, or did the crowded company at the theatre know of the fire beneath them—think you they would be happy in these supposed places?

“Nay!” it is replied, “this is but *a supposed danger*.” Well, drop the supposition then, as proving only this—that *present happiness and unconcern* are no evidence of present security, and then we fall back upon the declarations of God's word—“when they cry peace, peace, then sudden destruction cometh upon them;” “he that hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

If it be ignorance to believe this book, whose credentials are engraved upon the monuments of the past, and are growing brighter and brighter in the fulfilment of prophecy, every day, then our's be that ignorance; for well assured are we, that the weak things of God are wiser and better than the strongest and best things of men. God's truths, like His sun, are warm and luminous to those that feel and see, albeit some men are both torpid and sightless. We will yet believe that “the fear of the Lord (the reverent homage of the soul towards God) is the beginning of wisdom;” and in the place of one who thus fears the Lord we would stand,—nor envy the place of “the fool,” who says in his heart “there is no God.”

But I would fain hope that there are none here who really doubt the truth of the proposition—that God is the *alone proper* and satisfying rest of the immortal soul ; and that an attitude of supreme love and practical submission to Him, in all that we have, and are, and hope for—is the only proper, safe, and truly happy *place* for man.

Regarding this as settled—let us now pass from the consideration of what God is to the soul of man, in and of Himself, to the *place* which man is required to occupy in this world, before men.

God is not only *the rest* of the soul that loves Him—but He claims it as His right to be acknowledged as such, in a public manner, and has defined with sufficient accuracy a rule for the government of men in this respect.

Under this division of the subject, let me crave your attention to the following particulars :—

1. God has instituted a visible church in this world, made up of professed believers in Him, and willing subjects of His moral government. The terms of admission into this visible church, are genuine repentance towards God, on account of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the ground of acceptance with God ; thus the penitent sinner believeth with his heart unto righteousness, and then coming worthily to the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's Supper, he becomes visibly a party to the covenant of which these ordinances are the outward signs and seals ; and doing this, with a truly penitent and believing heart, he makes confession with his mouth unto salvation.

Such, in brief, is the visible church of God, in this world, in respect to the character of its members, and the terms of admission. This is the place where all men ought to be, that is, they ought to repent, with godly sorrow, of their sins ; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and come out before men upon the Lord's side.

That some make the public profession that is required, without genuine godliness, is very manifest ; but that it is the duty of all to be, and to do, what professing Christians profess to be, and to do, there is no doubt. The whole constitution of the visible church is for the glory of God, and the good of souls ; and it is man's highest duty, and most precious privilege, to be a member of this spiritual family of God.

God now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent. The language of Christ, in the gospel, as addressed to every one who reads or hears the gospel, is, "Follow me !" Moreover, He solemnly declares that he will confess, before God and the holy angels, those who confess Him before men ; and that He will, on the other hand, deny those who deny Him.

As the first and highest relation of man is the relation he sustains to God, so his first and highest duty is to God ; with this

relation and duty nothing must interfere; whatever comes between God and the soul, in this respect, must be put out of the way: be it father, mother, brother, sister, houses or lands, business, pleasures, or honors—all must yield place to God, the Creator, and to Christ, the Redeemer.

In order thus to show your obedience and supreme attachment to Christ, you, my dear hearers, must have a place in the family of his professed friends here upon earth. You must not only be His friends, but you must wear the badge of His household. It is an honor and privilege, as well as a duty, to which He calls you; and if you slight the call, you despise His authority and grace, and wrong your own souls. Where His commands and promises centre, that is the place for you to occupy, the ark of safety from which you may not turn away. But do any of you say, "may I not be a Christian without a *visible* profession of my faith?" I answer, Christ will confess those who confess Him. Do you still ask, "How must I confess Him?" You must repent, believe, be baptized in His name, obey his dying injunction respecting the showing forth of His death, in the Lord's Supper, and cleave unto Him, and to His people, in a well ordered life, conduct, and conversation.

In short, you must have a definite place somewhere among the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ; your soul must have a HOME in the house and family, in the love and service, in the covenant and promises of God.

2. This duty of belonging to the visible family of God, and wearing the badge of Christ's disciples, is one which is not discharged by the single act of being added to the church—in the ordinary initiatory rites of a public profession; but we are to have, and to hold a place, in some one of the assemblies of God's people—as our peculiar home, where our hearts may take root. The roots of a tree cannot be often disturbed with impunity; and that is a not less significant than beautiful figure of inspiration, in which the children of God are represented as cedars planted in the courts of the Lord's house, and whose branches are ever green.

What would you think of a tree whose roots were adapted to locomotion, and whose branches served the purpose of sails to catch every changing breeze? Or what would you think of a bird that was as much at home in any other nest as in its own? A strange tree indeed! a witless bird!—so is he a strange, witless, unprofiting and unprofitable professor of religion who easily forsakes his spiritual home. "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is he that wandereth from his place."

3. It may be observed, that when a change of relation becomes necessary, from one branch of the visible family of God to another,

as sometimes happens, in consequence of a change of residence, or from other causes, in such a case, it is doubtless the duty of persons so situated, to fix upon their new heart's home—their place, as speedily as is consistent with a proper regard to their future well-being. As a tree long out of ground will die, though dropped in the most luxuriant garden, so the Christian must be fixed somewhere, in the soil of gospel ordinances, or he will wither, and bear no fruit.

I may take this opportunity (without digressing from the legitimate bearing of this subject) to allude to a class of persons whose conduct has frequently caused me grief, and to whom a special word of counsel and reproof, in love, is due.

Not a few, who have been steady attendants upon the means of grace, and members of churches, in the places of their former residence, upon removal to this metropolis forget the necessities of their souls, and yield themselves up to floating impulses, to a fondness for novelties, and to the gratification of a roaming curiosity.

Failing to identify themselves early with the interests of Christ's kingdom in any one place, they are to be seen wherever the eddying tide of impulse carries them.

Temporary gratification, rather than permanent good, attracts them. One Sabbath finds them in *this* part of the city, and another in *that*—in the morning *here*, in the afternoon *there*. A frost comes over the heart; the tone of spirituality becomes languid; personal religion is neglected; the place of prayer is not frequented; temptations assail them with a power they never experienced before; they form worldly associations; religious associations and ties are relinquished; their consciences are silenced (not satisfied) with the thought that no one knows that they are professors of religion; they backslide further and further, till, on their sick beds, they are not unfrequently found doubting the validity of all their past hopes, their last moments are embittered with fears and remorse, and shrouded in despair.

The evil I have here hastily depicted, not from fancy, but from painful facts, is a great evil, and prevails most, so far as my observation extends, among *young men*.

If I speak in the hearing of *any*, whose case has been here described, of any age, or sex, or condition, let me say to such with affectionate earnestness, you are in jeopardy! You are the pity of the wise, the sport of devils, the companions of the simple. "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

If these gates of Zion are pleasant to you, then come with us, and we will seek your spiritual profit and peace—for this rebuke is not in anger, but in love; but if greater spiritual advantages invite you elsewhere, then fix your place there, and be steadfast. Of all homeless men, he is the most homeless, most to be pitied and re-



buked, who has no rest for his soul in the embrace of Divine Love, no home in the sanctuaries of God, no place in the garden of God on earth, where by the dresser's care he may be prepared to be transplanted to the Garden of God above.

Finally, brethren and friends, let me exhort you all to see to it that you are really in the soul's only proper and safe place. Some men spend their lives very near the place, but never come quite to it. Some of you are members of the visible church, and can be numbered by the eye of men; are you members of the true church, whose names are written in the book of God? Many will be disappointed in the last day, when they shall knock and say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" to whom He who hath the keys of life and death shall answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

Many more have been standing near, and have been in many ways useful to the temporal interests of the church, who, like the scaffolding of the ark, or of the temple, will be rejected at last as no part of the church itself, having never been really incorporated among the living stones which are cemented and builded together upon the only foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed, yea, thrice blessed! is the man who hath A HOME FOR HIS SOUL!!! The pious Psalmist saw and felt the beauty and force of the comparison between the bird's chosen place, and the heart's rest, as he witnessed the sparrows frequenting the beams and rafters which sheltered the altars of the Most High; and happy is he, who, with an earnest spiritual longing, and joyful relish, can say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."

Most sweet and precious are the promises of God to such:—"They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

It is when we can say from the heart—"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth"—that we can also from the heart offer the prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners."

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," and to such, the patient waiting of the soul on God is a weariness; but the truly devout Christian, WHOSE SOUL HATH A HOME IN GOD, exclaims, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand;" and

looking onward, beyond the wreck of visible worlds, and the paling away of created suns, and moons, and stars,—he sees a divine glory gilding the eternal mount of God, and the mansions of the redeemed; and feeling within himself the life of God, and the resurrection power of Christ, and the earnest of the Spirit—he takes up the note which yet lingers on Isaiah's harp-strings, and with the film of death on his eye, and the roar of Jordan in his ear, he triumphantly sings—"The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

But alas! how different, how sad, is the condition of the impenitent, unbelieving, wandering, homeless sinner's soul. Every tie of his heart is an *earthly tie*, destined to bleed; every hope of his heart a deceitful hope, destined to die; he has not made God his REST; his fixed sympathies are not in the Household of God; like a wandering bird he visits the altars of the Lord, but he does not dwell there. He must have a place! Death holds a mortgage on his body, and he must lie down in the grave; then he will no longer wander up and down any more. The violated law of God has a claim upon his unpardoned, unsanctified soul, and for all such souls *a place* is provided;—no light, no glory, no promise visits that place; it is the home of Dives and Judas; of all who have denied Christ, and made this world their chief joy. Between that home of the impenitent, the unbelieving, the disobedient, the ungodly, and the mansions of the redeemed, an impassable gulf is fixed by God: upon the latter, radiant glory from the face of the Lord God and the Lamb, eternally shines; over the former, eternal darkness, that can be felt, reigns.

Lord of Hosts, when thou gatherest thy saints together, that have made a covenant with Thee by sacrifice, may we be there; but, Oh! gather not our souls with sinners.

## SERMON CCCCLVI.

BY THE LATE REV. DANIEL A. CLARK.

### THE DANGER OF FALSE MAXIMS.

"I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst."—DEUT. 29 : 19.

THIS is a maxim which Moses, the inspired servant of God, puts into the mouth of ungodly men. It is a sentiment as prevalent in the present day as in the age in which it was uttered. The principle is this: our present conduct will not affect our future condition. It disassociates deportment and destiny, and says, "Whatever I may now be, it shall be well with me hereafter, 'let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

Let us now proceed to examine this maxim, with a view to ascertain whether it be a safe one for the regulation of our conduct. That it is not a safe maxim is evident; because

1. *It is contrary to all analogy.* Human conduct is uniformly productive of results, good or ill, according to the character of that conduct. There is a powerful principle of reproductiveness in both character and condition. Economy and industry are usually followed by independence and respectability. Intemperance, negligence, and dishonesty, by degradation, want, and shame.

2. *It denies a state of probation.* This state of being is one in which all are forming their character and condition for a future world. The maxim in question is at variance with this divine arrangement, as it alleges that our character here has no relation to our estate hereafter.

3. *The maxim confounds virtue and vice.* It confounds them in their results. If the laws of virtue have no sanctions they are mere advice. Thus the flood-gates of iniquity are opened on a miserable world, and our standard of character is found in the words of the Psalmist: "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees." Might makes right.

4. *The maxim is at war with men's best interests in the present as well as in the future life.* It removes restraint from the evil passions. It throws the reins upon the neck of the most unhalloved lusts. A community acting upon this principle would soon become annihilated. A few only of the mightiest in physical strength could survive the experiment.

5. *The maxim denies the existence of God, or denies his attributes.* If there is a God he must have given his creatures a law.

and that law must have sanctions. It cannot be that he is indifferent to the dishonoring of his law.

6. *The maxim is unreasonable.* God cares for the happiness of his creatures. He provides for the happiness of brutes, and yet more for that of man; but how can he care for the happiness of man, if he has endowed him with such passions, and laid no restraint on him?

7. *The maxim would go to prove that God often loves the wicked more than the righteous.* If it be well with all alike in a future world, the earlier we die, the earlier we are blest. On this principle, when men are cut off by the judgments of God for their iniquities, they are shown to be the favorites of heaven. Thus the old world went to heaven before Noah; the inhabitants of Sodom were suddenly taken to heaven when Lot was left to wander a vagabond upon the mountains.

8. *The maxim is unscriptural.* The Bible teaches that this life is the seed time, eternity the harvest. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The Word of God in its history, its promises, its exhortations, its warnings, its threatenings, goes to say that the maxim is a lie.

#### REMARKS.

1. We should beware what sentiments we imbibe, as they will surely affect our characters. Bad sentiments make bad men, while the contemplation of sacred truth tends to make men holy. We may not unfrequently judge men's characters when we know the school in which they were bred.

2. The maxim under consideration originates in the desire of a depraved heart. Men wish that their conduct may not affect their destiny. Wishing they assert, and asserting they at length believe.

3. How strange it is that men can be so blinded as to live in accordance with such a maxim. The falsehood of it is written not only in God's word, but on the conscience, and in the experience and the observation of all men. Consciousness testifies against it. He that does right is happy, while the "way of the transgressor is hard." We have seen that analogy is against it; the glutton is diseased; the drunkard destroys himself; the idle are improvident and poor; the vicious are finally hated; the deceitful are found out and detested; the dishonest gain at length the bad reputation they deserve.

Verily it is a proof of the blinding power of sin, that men can be found living in accordance with maxims the falseness of which is as manifest as the sun in the heavens.